



CANCER...

AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS

There are millions of people in the United States who are cancer survivors. Many say that they felt they had lots of support during their treatment, but once it ended, it was hard to make a transition to a new way of life. It was like entering a whole new world where they had to adjust to new feelings, new problems and different ways of looking at the world.

THE NEW NORMAL

The end of cancer treatment is often a time to rejoice. Most likely you're relieved to be finished with the demands of treatment. You may be ready to put the experience behind you and have life return to the way it used to be. Yet at the same time, you may feel sad and worried. It can take time to recover. And it's very

common to be thinking about whether the cancer will come back and what happens now. Often this time is called adjusting to a "new normal." You will have many different feelings during this time.

One of the hardest things after treatment is not knowing what happens next. Those who have gone through cancer treatment describe the first few months as a time of change. It's not so much "getting back to normal" as it is finding out what's normal for you now. People often say that life has new meaning or that they look at things differently.

YOUR NEW NORMAL MAY INCLUDE:

- Making changes in the way you eat and the things you do

- New or different sources of support
- Permanent scars on your body
- Not be able to do some things you used to do more easily
- Emotional scars from going through so much

You may see yourself in a different way, or find that others think of you differently now. Whatever your new normal may be, give yourself time to adapt to the changes. Take it one day at a time.

COPING WITH FEAR OF RECURRENCE

It's normal to worry that your cancer will come back. Almost all cancer survivors have this fear, so

you are not alone. It's common for people to feel a lack of control over their lives or have trouble trusting their bodies. Every ache or pain brings up the fear that the cancer is back. Some tips on how to cope with this are:

- **Be informed.** Understand what you can do for your health now, and find out about the services available to you. Doing this can give you a greater sense of control. Some studies even suggest that people who are well-informed about their cancer are more likely to recover more quickly than those who are not.
- **Be open and talk to your health care team about your fears.** They can assure you that they're looking out for you and help you feel less worried.
- **Express your feelings of fear, anger, or sadness.** People have found that when they express strong feelings like anger or sadness, they're more able to let go of them.
- **Look for the positive.** Sometimes this means looking for the good even in a bad time or trying to be hopeful

instead of thinking the worst. Try to use your energy to focus on wellness and what you can do now to stay as healthy as possible.

- **Find ways to help yourself relax.** Relaxation exercises have been proven to help others and may help you relax when you feel worried.
- **Be as active as you can.** Getting out of the house can help you focus on other things besides cancer and the worries it brings.
- **Focus on what you can control.** Being involved in your health care, keeping your appointments, and making changes in your lifestyle are some of the things you can control. Even setting a daily schedule can help. And while no one can control every thought, some say that they try not to dwell on the fearful ones.

For some it can be hard to let go of the fear and lack of trust your body. If your fears of recurrence seem overwhelming, talk to a counselor. He or she may be able to help you reduce your anxiety and calm your fears.

